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C O N F I D E N T I A L TAIPEI 004928

SIPDIS

STATE PASS AIT/W

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/20/2015

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [TW](#)

SUBJECT: LAST MINUTE ENTRY BRINGS THREE-WAY RACE FOR DPP
CHAIRMAN

REF: A. TAIPEI 4881

[B](#). TAIPEI 4870

[C](#). TAIPEI 4840

[D](#). TAIPEI 4818

Classified By: AIT Director Douglas Paal, Reasons: 1.4 (b/d)

[1](#)1. (C) Following days of intense political maneuvering and speculation about possible candidates for the January 15 party election for chairman of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), in the end three persons registered to run in the contest: Yu Shyi-kun, who announced his resignation as Presidential Office Secretary General, pro-independence DPP legislator Trong Chai (Tsai Tung-jung), and former Changhua County Magistrate Wong Chin-chu (Weng Chin-chu), who lost her bid for reelection on December 3. While Trong Chai and Yu Shyi-kun registered early for the January 15 election, Wong Chin-chu submitted her nomination with just half an hour to go before the deadline. All DPP members in good standing (approximately 400-500,000) are eligible to vote in the island-wide election on January 15. While voter turnout has traditionally been low in DPP chairmanship elections, the current sense of crisis in the party and the competitiveness of the election could boost turnout.

[1](#)2. (C) Wong's unexpected entry into the race was due to intense persuasion by retired DPP heavyweight Lin Yi-hsiung, who served as DPP chairman from 1998 to 2000 and is known for integrity and for strongly pushing idealistic causes such as an anti-nuclear energy campaign and a campaign to reduce the size of the Legislative Yuan. Over the past few days, Lin, clearly disturbed by the DPP's problems and its defeat in the December 3 local elections, issued a series of three public letters stating his views on selecting a new party chairman and a possible new premier. The third letter, addressed to Yu, charged Yu with being one of those responsible for the Chen administration's poor performance and urged him to withdraw from the chairmanship race. Lin obtained a candidate application form and reportedly approached former Minister of Justice Chen Ding-nan, who was defeated in the Ilan county magistrate race; prominent legislator Hong Chi-chang; and Wong in an effort to persuade them to enter the race.

[1](#)3. (C) Former DPP Chairman Su Tseng-chang told the Deputy Director on December 19, prior to Wong's last-minute entry into the race, that he expected Yu to win against Trong Chai in a two-person race, adding that regardless of what Chen Shui-bian said in his December 13 press release about not interfering in party affairs, the president remains the actual leader of the party. The implication of Su's remarks seemed to be that Yu as party chairman would remain attuned to President Chen's thinking. Su attributed Lin Yi-hsiung's recent actions to personal differences with Yu Shyi-kun. Lin and Yu each have roots in Ilan and both campaigned for DPP candidate Chen Ding-nan, who on December 3 lost a close election for Ilan County magistrate. According to Su, Lin Yi-hsiung blames the loss on Yu's past strong support for a local political figure whose strong criticisms were instrumental in Chen Ding-nan's defeat. Su said Lin was also dissatisfied with Yu's performance when he was premier from 2002-2005.

Comment

[1](#)4. (C) Wong's candidacy, with Lin Yi-hsiung's backing, directly challenges Yu Shyi-kun and is an indirect challenge to President Chen. It remains to be seen how effective a campaign Wong can mount, perhaps with Lin's advice. It will also be another measure of the degree to which President Chen has lost his party's support.

PAAL